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OUR YEARS IN AMERICA

THE concern about our relation to the American world and our witness in it has been in the mind of our Church much longer than we suppose. It was there from the beginning.

It is true that in large part that concern for America was not fruitful because our people were afraid of America — afraid of the corrupting influences that might weaken our Reformed character and rob us of our heritage.

There was, indeed, cause for fear, but no good excuse for yielding to it to the point of becoming paralyzed by it. There is little doubt, however, that much of our living in America has been (and still is?) dominated by the fear complex. The result is that for the most part our relation to America, in religious respect, has been one of antithesis. We were set against it. To call a thing "American" in a religious reference was to put it under grave suspicion.

In consequence, our approach to America was negative. In our relations we were on the defensive. We were to shut out the threatening American world; and in the process we were bound to shut ourselves out from it.

There is, however, nothing to be gained, even for ourselves, by a purely negative approach to the world in which we live. Nor do we alone lose. Our world does, too. We cannot serve our world only with negatives, nor save it merely by defending ourselves against it, nor win it merely by resisting it.

When our negatives lose their force, as they must and as they did, when our

defense weakens, as it must and as it did, we end up by succumbing to the very world we were supposed to influence and serve. Who can count the number of those whom our churches have lost to the "American" world and the typically "American" church? Who can measure the extent to which our own Church and her heritage have suffered dilution from the intrusion of "American" influences?

We may still boast of being the most Calvinistic body in America. But the boast is not the accomplishment. It takes more than the creed in the book to make for a governing theology of thought and life. And it takes more than pride in the possession of a superior heritage to serve our world with a living, aggressive, and advancing theological witness.

IF we have lost anything of our heritage, the fault is not of those who

gave but of those who were content only to receive. If we have in any measure failed of our calling, the fault is not of those who placed a task upon us, but of those who did not wholly acquit themselves of it.

Our settling fathers, when they came to America, were concerned not only to survive but as well to serve. And near the turn of the century, when our denominational existence seemed settled and secure, there was agitation for the appointment of an English-speaking missionary, "so that an influence might proceed from us to the American world." These were evidences of a concern for a positive approach to our world and for an aggressive outreach into it.

One of the most powerful and penetrating expressions of this concern came from the Rev. Foppe M. Ten Hoor, just after the turn of the century. The Rev. Ten Hoor served as Professor of Systematic Theology in the Theologi-

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cal School of the Christian Reformed Church from 1900 to 1924. In 1901 he was one of the speakers during the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Theological School, at which time he spoke about "Our Theological School in Relation to the American World."

Here was a clear vision of our opportunity and calling in America, and a forthright challenge to consciously live in this world as belonging to it and to serve this world as responsible for it. The Rev. Ten Hoor was certain that we had a contribution to make to America, and he was of the impassioned conviction that we must make it or fail, and in the process of failing, die.

What contribution? A contribution in terms of America's peculiar need, and in terms of our historic strength. America's need, as Ten Hoor saw it, was for a sound view of life to go along with her interest in the practicalities of life, —a substantial and living theology, a "knowledge which is life." And our historic strength, as he saw it, was precisely the substantial and thoroughly basic character of the Reformed Theology to which we had fallen heir.

Ten Hoor, therefore, judged that we had in our Calvinistic heritage the very thing to give that would answer to America's need. But he saw no magic in Calvinism as such, or in its transplantation through us into the American

world. Only a living Calvinism, appropriated by us and mediated through us, would do. This meant for him not a transposed Dutch Calvinism, but a Calvinism renewed and growing in response to the stimuli coming out of the American world. Ten Hoor looked for a thorough and undiluted Calvinism, *but a native, American Calvinism.*

And who should develop it and make it a positive force in the American world? Ten Hoor's answer: The Christian Reformed Church, through the agency of her Theological School and the theologians who came out of that school. And Ten Hoor declared that if the Reformed theology, of which we are the heirs and exponents, did not develop in and for America, "she has no future here," she "will be written down for dead," "she will wither and petrify, and . . . in course of time become an antique in this new world."

WE are placing elsewhere in this issue a translation of Professor Ten Hoor's address. It is a voice out of our past which speaks to the conscience of our present. It is meaningful for us who live and carry on in that "future" about which Ten Hoor spoke, but which he did not live to see.

The Rev. James Daane's article in this same issue touches on the hopes

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and fears to which Ten Hoor gave expression. It was written without reference to it, and, indeed, without immediate knowledge of Ten Hoor's address. But the burden of the one is very closely related to the burden of the other, and taken together they reflect the continuing problems and hopes of "the days of our years" in America.

GEORGE STOB

The Young Calvinists on the **RACE QUESTION**

by HARRY R. BOER

IN the July issue of the *Reformed Journal* appeared the statement of Resolutions on the Race Question adopted by the Young Calvinist Federation at its 1950 convention in Lynden, Washington. The race question stands very much in the forefront of men's thinking today, and the sane approach of the Young Calvinists is deserving of attention. In two articles we propose to address ourselves to the race problem. The present article will briefly sketch the contemporary relevance of the question and in a following article we hope to dwell on the resolutions drawn up by the Young Calvinists.

The term "race question" has a very special meaning which it is necessary to understand if we are to enter into the problems of the contemporary racial situation. It does not refer simply to problems raised by contact between races. It refers to the problems occasioned by the concern for or against equality in the relations between races living within the same society. There is no race *question* where one race is able to lord it with impunity over another. The slavery question, for instance, was not a race question as we understand the term today. In it the Negro was wholly passive. The ques-

tion was not one mutually entertained by the races involved but was an issue involving the relationship of the dominant to the subject race which existed solely among the masters and was resolved solely by them.

The Shift in Power Centers

THAT there is today an acute race question is brought about largely by the fact that there has taken place on a grand scale a shifting of the relative positions of the white and other races. The supremacy which the white man has exercised for three and a half cen-

turies is past in most of the Asiatic areas and it is passing in many parts of Africa. In America the process of equalization between White and Negro is increasing in tempo. That these changes should come about was inevitable. Wherever the white man went he placed in the hands of the peoples he conquered the very instruments that had made him strong, notably education. Only so could a profitable exploitation of the colonial areas take place, especially in the (to the white man) uncongenial tropics. Selfish considerations were not unmixed with altruistic ones in introducing to the colonies and other areas the benefits of western civilization, it is true. But the history of colonization and western expansion is certainly more one of seeking gain than one of seeking the welfare of fellow-man. A noble exception to this in the total outreach of the West to the rest of the world was the missionary expansion of the Church. It had spiritual aims and was motivated by obedience to the Lord of the Church to bring the inhabitants of the ends of the earth into the Christian communion. In so doing, however, it contributed in an incalculable measure to giving to them a sense of dignity and worth without which no people can come to greatness and independence.

As a result of these several forces it was inescapable that the western world should, in time, come to find its colonial subjects asserting the rights and privileges of their growing maturity. The process was hastened by World War II. The West was weakened by the demands the war made on it, it was cut off from several significant areas during the war, and its extensive reliance on colonial areas for man-power and raw materials developed in the subject peoples their growing sense of and desire for independence. That independence has now fully come for most of the peoples of the Orient and it is in process of rapid becoming among the peoples of Africa. Under different circumstances and out of a different background the era of equality of opportunity and dignity is opening for the American Negro. The once unquestioned superiority of the white man is everywhere being challenged or repudiated. This assault upon his dominance the white man is largely unable to suppress. Many, indeed, do not want to suppress it but want rather to recognize its validity and to guide it into moral channels. How to achieve a new relationship, a new adjustment of

power centers, in the face of weakening white and rising colored strength lies at the heart of the so-called race question.

It would be erroneous to assume, however, that the race question in the contemporary world exists only in terms of white-colored relationships. Mohammedan-Hindu frictions in India, intensified by religious passions, create problems of the greatest moment in the seething Orient. Tensions between Mohammedan Hamites and the negroid tribes in West Africa are restrained only by the firm hand of British and French authority. And lest the white people of the West think of themselves as a cohesive unity devoid of racial pride and prejudice it is necessary only to remember the cruelties to which the Teutonic pride of race and blood led the German Nazis.

Communist Strategy

ANOTHER factor has lately appeared without a recognition of which the present race question can only be partially understood. In the post-World War II era the Communists have presented themselves as the saviours of all oppressed and minority groups. Their creed promises to all liberty and equality. Since the Communists do not have behind them a history of rule in the present and former colonial areas there is no past performance by which to check the sincerity of their claims and promises. This advantage they are exploiting to the full. Over against a history of western overlordship in which instances of oppression and aggrandizement can be picked up freely in almost any area they are setting the rosy picture of Utopias they will establish if only given the chance.

Possibly no single factor in contemporary history has done so much to make the West sensitive to racial discrimination and put its house of racial relationships in order as has this element in Communist strategy and ideology. The recent race riot in Cicero, Illinois, was given wide publicity in the Orient. Governor Dewey in his visit there found it necessary to allude apologetically to it. His remarks are illuminating. Mr. Dewey said he had been "shocked to find that an incident of racial prejudice involving a few hundred people out of a nation of 150,000,000 people is front-page news in Singapore and elsewhere . . . A major point in Communist propaganda has been the distortion of life in

the United States and the claim that a rare incident of ruffianism represents anything basic in our country." Mr. Dewey may have had tongue in cheek when he went on to say that in the United States "every race, every color and every religion have mingled in the creation of a peaceful, happy life based on freedom, equality and justice for all . . . Such ancient prejudice as still lingers in some sections is dwindling. And I venture the prophecy that when the eighty-eight years since the Emancipation Proclamation have stretched to the century mark the ugly concept of discrimination will have been extinguished" (*New York Times*, August 1).

We hope Mr. Dewey is right in making his prophecy but it is to be feared that the ancient prejudice is not a lingering but a still virulent malady which will cease to exist only as a result of aggressive action on the part of both Whites and Negroes.

In America the more favorable climate in which the Negro is beginning to find himself is in no small part due to his own initiative in the reaching of a higher economic level, to the use of education on a large scale, and to the exemplary service rendered by a number of noble representatives of the race. The American Negro is beginning to "arrive." He has become a factor in the national community that can no longer be ignored. Politically he has become important as a voting block. In sports he is displaying a virility and capacity that is amazing. In the arts he has able representatives. In education, in the press, in the political forum he speaks with increasing vigor and influence.

The Christian Response

IT is evident, therefore, that the race question has come into prominence as a result of many and varied pressures. A whole complex of circumstances has brought it to the fore. It is well to be aware of this. We must all guard against the spiritual pride that might attribute to our generation a greater altruism, a nobler moral sensitivity than our fathers possessed. We are being brought to the realization of a duty whose discharge is long overdue by an intricate complex of pressures and circumstances, not first by self-generated moral insights.

What can be said in modest honesty is that the American white community

THE Y.C. AND THE RACE QUESTION — Continued

and more particularly the Christian element in it is not acting *merely* in response to external pressures. The circumstances that move us to a better attitude to the American Negro would not have the effect and force they have were there not an awakened conscience to respond to those circumstances. It is the union of these two that is creating among us a more favorable climate for Negro development as also a more generous attitude to other races within and beyond our national boundaries.

What is now highly necessary is that the American community, both White and Negro, seek further solution of the big problem on its doorstep in basic scriptural considerations and in a deep sense of moral obligation. Our motivation must be sought in Christian duty, not in humanistic altruism. The assertion of mere human goodness, such as it is, is not enough to carry the day. The question is basically one of social justice, and the establishment of justice on any front requires a base in divine norms and a power of moral conviction rooting in more than human altruism. Efforts aiming at social justice that are motivated only by a humanistically conceived Declaration of Human Rights do not have within themselves the strength either to push justice to its true ends or to resist unjust demands. Neither does such altruism possess the dynamic to press the demands of justice consistently once its first strength has been spent and when, as might happen, the existing pressures begin to slacken. To resolve the race problem there is needed both a Christian understanding

of it and a Christian dynamic to effect the steps which the Christian understanding indicates must be taken.

The South African Contrast

WE should note, finally, that the resolutions framed by the Young Calvinists stand in sharp contrast to the policy and practice of our South African Reformed brethren. That Calvinists living in racial contexts so diverse as those obtaining in the United States and in South Africa can take such diverging attitudes on the same question indicates what a significant and powerful role pressures play in the molding of our thought. In America the proportion of Whites to Negroes is about twelve to one. In South Africa it is one to three. The conscientious American White reflecting on the race question sees the problem as that of securing justice for the Negro minority. South African Whites, by and large, see their problem as one of maintaining their civilization over against the large numerical superiority of the colored population. They are not unmindful of the rights and aspirations of the colored community but in the difficulty of pursuing both aims at once the interests of the white population are unquestionably receiving priority.

World opinion, and not least American opinion, is almost unqualified in its condemnation of South African racial policies. Usually the Boers are blamed. What is not generally recognized is that prime minister Malan's Nationalist government could never retain power were

it not for substantial support given by the English and other white elements. That the South African policy of *Apartheid* (strict segregation of the races) is open to serious question is plain. What is to be deplored is that the general condemnation which *Apartheid* finds is seldom accompanied by a sincere effort to understand the racial situation in South Africa.

The adoption of the Race Resolutions by the Young Calvinists raises the question whether, in view of their divergence from South African Calvinist views there ought not to be an exchange of views between qualified representatives of the two groups. Although our two situations are greatly different, this can hardly justify a continued divergence on matters of principle. Does not our confession of the communion of saints and the fact of our being sister churches impose a mutual obligation to struggle with the problem? The Race Resolutions of the Young Calvinists are not a set of rules drawn up for a particular section of society but they profess to be scriptural principles having universal validity. But undoubtedly South African Calvinists take issue with them as we do with their policies. Does not this call for a meeting of minds?

After this brief introduction to the race question in its contemporary context we hope in a following article to discuss the resolutions as such. That the general tenor of that article will be favorable to them will be plain from the allusions to the resolutions that have already been made. There are in them, however, statements, formulations, and omissions that are open to criticism, and of these too, we hope to take note.

Our Theological School in Relation to the American World

The following article is a translation of an address delivered by the Rev. Foppe M. Ten Hoor at the 25th Anniversary of our Theological School on March 20, 1901, and which was published in *DE WACHTER* of April 17, 1901. To facilitate its reading I have omitted some parts and have in places substituted a paraphrase to maintain the flow of thought. My paraphrase ap-

pears without quotation marks. All the rest is direct translation, and is indicated by inclusion within quotation marks. The article is not complete, therefore, but is otherwise a fairly identical reproduction of the substance and form of Professor Ten Hoor's address. The sub-titles are translations of Ten Hoor's own "three points." — George Stob.

by FOPPE M. TEN HOOR

THE American world scarcely knows that our School exists. And how small she is in comparison with that great American world! Nonetheless, she may even so have great significance for this world. . . . If only our School allows herself to be used of Christ, she will be a large factor in this land. . . . God chooses rather the small and the weak, because He is best able

through them to magnify His power.”

“...We dare to speak of our small School in relation to this American world. Our School, though small, is nonetheless also in this American world, and as such belongs to that world. She may not stand by herself, in detached isolation, but must live in relation to this world.”

The Dangers, Peculiar to the American World, Which Menace Our School

THE immigrant Church and School must become American by living into and becoming part of America. This has its perils for our School. For we are beset by the dangers of externalism, superficiality, and reduction to characterlessness. “The American world makes more of numbers than of weight.” In matters of education, “the quality of one’s learning” is measured by “the number of class-hours he has to his credit.” This spirit “threatens the respectability and the soundness of our School.”

In America “people place more emphasis upon the *multa* (many in number and extent) than upon the *multum* (much in quality and substance), more emphasis upon study in wide scope, less upon penetration into the depths. People like to know many things, a bit about everything, but little attention is given to the organic *relation* of the several things, or to the *root, the basic principle* out of which they come. The American world is fond of wide knowledge, but cares little about real learning. It does not go for principles.”

It is on this score that we need to be careful. For “if we do not recognize how our knowledge stands related to principles, we can fall into all manner of error without even being aware of it. Whoever is not more or less, and consciously, *principally* Reformed, can become at any time unReformed. In that case continuing membership in a Reformed Church depends merely on circumstance. Let a ‘smart man’ come along and commend something else in an attractive way to these superficial souls, and they sometimes suddenly reverse direction and turn away. The native Dutch conservatism is at first something of a restraint, but this, too, eventually wears off in the American environment, and therefore cannot protect us against the danger.”

Our Theological School must, therefore, guard against this danger of superficiality, which results in the dilution of our principles and the loss of the Reformed character of our theology. In view of this we are tempted “to withdraw ourselves from the influence of the American world. And just on that account we are menaced by . . . the very opposite peril, namely, that of *isolating* ourselves from the American world. And to shut ourselves out from the life which surrounds us would result in our becoming petrified. If our School is going to crawl off in a corner and separate herself from the American world, she has no future and may be written down for dead.”

“It is true that temporary isolation is in a certain sense legitimate and necessary. The peril is only this — that we should set up this isolation, this separation, *as an end*. Our School needs a period of time in which to develop to that measure of scholarly strength which will enable her to participate worthily in the theological struggle and to cooperate toward the development of theology in the American world.”

To fulfill our calling in this respect is a large task. This means, for one thing, that we must “enter again into the rich, broad, and deep Reformed theology of the 16th and 17th centuries,” the more so since there was no real development in Reformed theology during the 150 years prior to 1850. “Our traditional Reformed theology must first be taken up again into our consciousness, and be vitalized by us, before we can bring it into the American world.” And the discharge of our calling requires, further, that “our School must . . . orientate herself to the field of American theology, so that she may know how she is eventually to take her place in it.”

“Isolation, therefore, may not become her goal. If it did, our School would wither and petrify, and she would in course of time become an antique in this new world. In that case our School could not be used by the Holy Spirit for the further unfolding of the riches of truth given to us in the Holy Scriptures. To accomplish that she must enter into contact with the American world — not only with the positive but also with the negative tendencies that prevail here. In fact, the history of theology clearly teaches that the development of theology has gotten stimulus largely from heretical move-

ments. That will also be the pattern for the future in this American world. . . .”

The Claims Which This American World Makes Upon Our School

EVERY nation has its own peculiar genius. The Church and the theology which develops in a given nation shows the characteristics of that national type. Since we are in America, our theology will be conditioned by the demands made upon us by our American world. [What Ten Hoor means to point out is that theology is not merely a system of logical abstractions. It is related to life, and our theology will be conditioned in its form, its temper, its emphases, by the living environment by which it is influenced and to which it responds. We notice these differences even in parts of Scripture, and speak, e. g., of Matthew as the gospel for the tradition-worshipping Jews, of Mark as the gospel for the heroic Romans, and of Luke as the gospel for the humanitarian Greeks. Yet each gospel is basically the same as the other gospel. So, too, Calvinism is basically the same everywhere. Yet we recognize a distinctively Dutch, or Scotch, or French Calvinism. So, too, there must and there will be an American Calvinism.—GS]

“The American world places before our School a *negative* and a *positive* claim; a prohibition and a commandment, if we may so say.” Americans have no flair for and no patience with the theoretical and philosophical. The genius of America is its concern for the practical. “The American world wants to know *whether it pays*. . . whether a thing has significance for practice, whether a thing is profitable for one’s living.” Thence the *negative* claim that America makes upon us. “It demands that we shall abstain from all one-sided objectivism and intellectualism and metaphysical speculation.”

The characteristic of Reformed theology is that “it is in principle and aim objective, and this is evidence of its truth and at the same time of its worth. It begins with God and ends in God. It finds its starting point and its final end in God. . . . With that it stands or falls. The first principle and the final goal of theology do not lie in man.”

This does not at all mean, however, that it is not concerned with the life of man. In fact, the “glorifying of God does not take place apart from man,

OUR THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL — Continued

but occurs precisely in and through man. The true, the complete glorification of God is something that God accomplishes in and through the deliverance and salvation of His people. The glorification of God and the salvation of His people are not two things that stand alongside and independent of each other, but they are one. . . ."

"This unity has not always been sufficiently kept in view in Reformed theology." There was a tendency to fall into the one-sidedness of either speculation or mysticism. "Reformed theology has thus in the past always gravitated, in greater or less degree, between an intellectual and a mystical one-sidedness. That duality also came to the fore in our day. But instead of bringing this duality back to unity, the two extremes are now being independently systematized. There is, so it is said, a two-fold theology. There is a theology as *knowledge of God*, which is practical and has references to life. That is the theology for the congregation, the theology for preaching. There is, however, another kind of theology, namely, theology as *science*, whose concern is not with practice, but with itself, with knowledge; and which is designed for the School and not for preaching. . . . This duality in theology results in a dual tendency in the Church. The one follows the intellectualistic and speculative, and the other, *in reaction* to it, follows the practical and mystical line, and this eventually results in conflict."

"This does not help us out of the difficulty, but puts us deeper into it. We must desist from the first extreme, and then the second will disappear of itself. We do not have one truth for the mind only, and another truth only for the heart. The same, the one truth, is for the whole man, and is designed by God for the fulfillment of all our needs."

"The practical spirit of the American world requires of us that we shall be done with that intellectualistic and speculative one-sidedness, because our theology will never register here in that form. It will run up against a stone wall in this world, and our School would in that way make herself useless to the American world, and in time put herself beyond the possibility of serving that world."

The American world also makes a *positive* demand upon us. It does not do so consciously, but this demand is

upon us because of America's need. The American concern for practicality is accompanied by a lack of concern for basic principles. "As a result, the American theological world suffers from superficiality, and has sustained the almost complete loss of the substantial and penetrating conceptions which she once inherited from Europe. Because of that, theology and Christianity here are lost in subjectivism and mysticism of every. . . variety."

"America has need of a substantial theology which is at the same time meaningful for the practice of life, — has need of the knowledge which is life. If Reformed theology does not reckon with that need, it has no future here. The need for something solid will assert itself again in the American world. Earnest people will not, in the long run, be able to survive on a water-and-milk theology. Our School is thus confronted with the challenge to reckon with these needs."

The Calling Which Our School Must Fulfill in This American World

"... THE Hollanders who have come to America in the last fifty years or so [i. e., since about 1850 — GS] have not yet. . . given a sufficient account of their calling which they must. . . fulfill here in Christian and theological matters. Most of them have come here. . . out of self-interest. . . in order to get out of America as much as they can. They take from America, but they give her very little. This is true not only in social and political affairs, but also in Christian and theological matters. . . This is, frankly, a bit selfish. It may not continue thus; in this way America has meaning for us, but we come to have no meaning for America."

"We Reformed Hollanders have a task to perform here also in the sphere of church and theology. What many people up to the present understand by Americanization is a totally one-sided and a much too low ideal. . . . People are willing to repudiate what they are and instead become American, often without knowing what a real American is. . . . One sees everywhere the striving to conform in everything to America and to take everything over, without distinguishing between what is good and what is bad. How little evidence there is of the courage and strength to

row against the Methodistic (today we would call it 'the fundamentalist'—GS) current in America. People let themselves be carried along with the current, find it much more convenient, and it pays off better in church-life, too."

"But our people do not perform any particular service in the American world that way. That is because they are not seriously enough concerned; they are without the power of resistance to remain standing, they are not conscious enough of their own Reformed confession and its principles to know its opposites and to contend with zeal for it. . . . The correction of this is therefore, our first task. Even so, that is only preparatory. For unless we live again with full consciousness into our solid, deep, rich theology, we cannot fulfill our task here."

What, then, is our task? "That task is especially to exhibit the meaning of Reformed theology for life, and to demonstrate its living character. The Reformed teaching is intellectually strong because it reaches down to principles, the true principles. But the power in this teaching has not yet. . . come to expression in life. Many people who are Reformed in doctrine, are for the most part Labadistic [the reference is to mystics, who make much of Christian experience, after Jean de Labadie — GS] or Methodistic in life. The Roman Church puts the Roman character into the life of the people; the Methodists put the Methodistic character into the life of the people; but the Reformed Church has never yet really succeeded in putting the Reformed, the genuinely Reformed character into the life of the people as a whole. . . . Our doctrine comes to very little expression in active life. . . . Is, then, our truth not in itself a truth for life? a word of life unto life, a truth that makes free?"

The fault "does not lie with Reformed doctrine as such, but it lies with us. We do not live deeply enough in it, and therefore it lives so little in us. If, indeed, there is a teaching in which there is power for a life of inward and outward godliness it is the Reformed truth. . . ."

"It is the task of our School and of our Church in the American world to cultivate an awareness of the practical significance of the Reformed confession and to make it real in the practice of life. . . . The Reformed Church has never before taken its place amongst a people so characteristically practical as

the people of the American world; and we know that the genius of a people is reflected also in the church, and that the church of any nation has found her peculiar strength in that genius. . . . Is it not now indicated by God in His providence that this is the nation in which the great practical significance, the dynamic, of the Reformed faith, is to be realized? If that does not happen, then the Reformed Church has no particular reason for existing in this land If the dynamic of the Reformed faith does not come to the strongest possible expression, the solid Reformed theology will not gain entrance into America. In that case we should fail of making contact with the American world. Therefore, this is for the Reformed Church and theology here the question of 'to be or not to be.'"

"There is something else. . . . If we are to fully comprehend our task in the American world, then. . . we must also be intelligently aware of the present status of the American world. This world lives at present in a highly crucial period. . . . Christianity is falling off like the rushing waters. . . . One who takes note of current phenomena

is aware that the fullness of unbelief has come in this world. The flood of a new modernism is on the roll."

"And this will be followed by reaction, as was more or less the case with the old modernism of Europe. As soon as infidelity appears for what it is, enunciates its own principles, and discloses its nature, many earnest souls will begin to look for security and will be moved to take the Confession and the Christian life more seriously. Negation does not profit, and uncertainty does not satisfy. That will be the time in which we, too, can bring our weight to bear in the American world — the time in which there will be need for solid truth and a sure redemption."

"If our School, and through her our Church, is to accomplish her future task in the American world then she must apply herself with all earnestness to prepare strong men. . . ."

"Will our School be able to cooperate in this task" of serving America's need with a firm faith? Some doubt it. A Reformed professor from the Netherlands once said, a few years ago, that he did not expect much from the Reformed Church and theology of the

Hollanders in America. The Reformed Church, so he said, tended toward loss of distinctiveness, and the Christian Reformed Church suffered from petty-mindedness and national conservatism, and sat complacent in its little corner. We acknowledge that, as concerns our Church, there is some truth in that, and we do not mention it in order to ignore it. But, as for the future, we have better hopes than that professor. We do not believe that God transplanted the Christian Reformed Church from the Netherlands to this land only to languish and disappear. Our Theological School, too, holds promise of something quite different. We have already a number of young men in our Church, and more at our School, who have so many and great gifts from God, that by dint of earnest and persevering study in theological science they may become men of the first rank. This is providential. It bespeaks a future for us. If we had no task for the future in this American world God would not have given us such gifts and such strength. For that reason we go on with courage. We His servants will arise and build, and the God of heaven, He *will* prosper us."

On Behalf of a Free University

by NED B. STONEHOUSE*

THE opportunity of commenting upon the movement for the establishment of a Calvinistic University in America is most welcome. In particular it is refreshing to be able to mention certain considerations which commend the establishment of a *free university*.

The entire subject has been fairly and advantageously introduced through the publication of Professor Zylstra's article entitled: "Towards a Calvinistic University." That article sets forth succinctly and vividly the substance of a series of informative and stimulating articles from the pen of the editor of *De Wachter*, the Rev. E. Van Halsema. Though he makes no claims to originality Dr. Zylstra has succeeded, in a fresh and vigorous manner, in transplanting their challenge for English readers. The observations of the Rev. J. Ehlers, a regular contributor to *De Wachter*, are also presented briefly in

the interest of stimulating concrete thinking and planning for the future.

With a view to the wisest use of the space available, it might appear that I should restrict my discussion to the aspect of principle. Upon reflection, however, it seems to me that to do so would not be practical. For in the evaluation of this question historical and practical considerations have constantly and perhaps necessarily been interwoven with the issue of principle. Fortunately, moreover, the case for a *free university* has frequently been presented, and is by no means dependent upon what I may be able to say here to support it.

Most recently the Rev. I. Van Dellen, also in the columns of *De Wachter* (April 10, 17 and 24, 1951), has pleaded this cause with his characteristic candor and warmth. Conscious of the stupendous difficulties involved in the establishment of a Calvinistic

university, Van Dellen avers that it can become a reality only through the cooperation of confessing Christians, and that such cooperation can be realized only if the point of departure is that of Reformed principles as they relate to church and school. At any cost we must avoid riding "*den ezel des nuts*." His main appeal is to the principle of sphere-sovereignty as that is implicated in the doctrine of the church which finds expression in the Confession and other church standards. Van Dellen is indeed not disinterested in practical matters. But basic to his thinking is the view that where there is a departure from Scriptural principles, ultimately things will go wrong in practice. And he is confident that one who believingly

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maintains principles, even if he is confronted in their application with seemingly insurmountable obstacles, will not end up with disillusionment.

Do not discount Van Dellen's love for the Church! He takes his stand because of his conviction that to proceed in the line of ecclesiastical higher education would be harmful to both church and school. He points out that the church may be harmed if, for example, in synodical assemblies there is considerable occupation with the details of college or university administration. On the other hand, a university might possibly be hampered by church control so as to prevent it from freely carrying out its scientific task in accordance with the principles revealed in the Word of God.

The Voice of History

THE voice of Van Dellen is not a lone voice in the wilderness! Is it not the voice of history? Let us at any rate be alert and circumspect in attending to the lessons of history. It is not insignificant that the Free University of Amsterdam, ever since its simple beginnings in 1880 as a heroic act of faith, has been the chief historical factor in keeping alive the ideal of a Calvinistic university in America. *The profound and broad continuity of Reformed faith and action in America with the Reformed life of Holland commends the adoption of the same approach here.* May the difference in geography be pleaded as dictating a basically different approach so far as principle is concerned?

As bearing upon our understanding of the principles which have guided action in Holland one may also advantageously bear in mind what is involved in the establishment this very year in Kampen of the John Calvin Foundation. For many years the question had been agitated whether it might not be possible for students to qualify for the doctor's degree at the Kampen Theological School as well as at the Free University of Amsterdam. There have indeed been differences of opinion as to what Reformed principles demanded and allowed on this matter. At long last, however, a solution was found in the establishment of the Foundation as a free institution which will officially sponsor the scientific work and award

degrees while utilizing the faculty of the Theological School. Thus the necessity of organizing a separate faculty was obviated. But it is remarkable that in Holland in the year 1951 as in 1880 the commitment to free scientific education is such that the measure of erecting a new independent corporation was adopted rather than the expedient of utilizing existent ecclesiastical auspices.

The history of Calvin Seminary and Calvin College has been plausibly appealed to as counting on the other side of the debate and as perhaps pointing to the advisability of adopting a distinctive approach in America. However impressive the argument may be, one should not over-simplify the situation. For it appears that the history of these institutions does not speak unequivocally in favor of ecclesiastical control.

In the first place, it should not be overlooked that during a considerable part of this period of seventy-five years, the Christian Reformed Church was conducting *a theological seminary (which included instruction in certain propaedeutic courses) rather than a college or university.* The earliest history may not be appealed to, therefore, as sanctioning ecclesiastical control of general education.

Secondly, it is highly significant that, while the Christian Reformed Church apparently has never taken the position that it is compelled for principle's sake to relinquish control of Calvin College, it has made clear during the later phases of development that basically it has retained control only or chiefly because of practical necessity. As Van Halsema's survey of the history in his second article discloses, the dominant official viewpoint has been that, while ecclesiastical control may be justified under certain circumstances, the maintenance of higher general education independently of the Church would constitute a "purer" approach from the standpoint of principle. The official position of the Church appears to be that *the Church does not have the "positive task" of maintaining such an institution and that "it is correct in principle that the College . . . proceed from a society."* On the other hand, it is insisted that *the Church "neither can nor may transfer the College until a society comes into being that offers sufficient*

assurance for the Reformed character and scholarly standard of the instruction and for its own financial strength." No one can criticize the solicitude of the Christian Reformed Church at this point. Nevertheless, it is clear that the history under review by no means contradicts the ultimate correctness of the principle of society control of a college or university.

In the third place, the history of the free Christian schools which are associated in the National Union also bears upon the subject. For it shows that in the very Reformed community where Calvin College developed and has been maintained, there has been a sturdy commitment to the principle of the conduct of general education independently of church control. *These Christian schools have been organized and maintained as free schools only because of the conviction that this approach was required by principle.* If merely practical considerations had been decisive, no doubt there would have been much that might have commended the simpler parochial approach of the Roman Catholics and Lutherans.

The Demands of Principle

ON the subject of principle I shall confine myself to a few general observations on one basic point. This has to do with the necessity of making proper distinctions between the kingdom of God and the church. Dr. Zylstra has eloquently referred to the moving considerations that "nothing matters but the kingdom" and "everything matters because of it." This is solid ground. But no Reformed man, no matter how loyal he is to the church and to his own church, would be prepared to substitute the word "church" for the word "kingdom" in these declarations.

There is indeed an intimate relationship between church and kingdom. The church may be viewed as a significant aspect of the kingdom of God, as a concrete though partial manifestation of it in history. And the church may also be regarded as existing for the sake of the broader realization of the kingdom in that its members, as citizens of the kingdom, possess the truth and power from above by which alone the kingdom can be manifested on earth as it is in heaven. But it remains absolutely basic that one shall not simply identify church and kingdom. Much less, of

course, could one properly identify any particular denomination with the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is a more comprehensive and embracing concept than the church. The kingdom, as Geerhardus Vos defines it, is "*the actual exercise of the divine supremacy in the interest of the divine glory*" (*Biblical Theology*, p. 412). Though this definition does not perhaps do complete justice even to all that Vos subsumes under the kingdom of God, it is indicative of the universal scope of the kingdom. Professor L. Berkhof has also taken great pains in his *Systematic Theology* (pp. 568 ff.) to combat views which simply identify the church and the kingdom. So does Professor Herman Ridderbos in his important new work on the kingdom of God (*De Komst van het Koninkrijk*, pp. 296 ff.).

The comprehensive and universal scope of the kingdom of God is perhaps best envisaged if one takes account of its fundamentally eschatological character. For it applies to the world to come, to the new heaven and the new earth in which dwelleth righteousness, in which the divine supremacy will have been decisively and finally exercised to realize the divine glory. The body of Christ will indeed be taken up into this kingdom of consummation and its members will fulfill in perfection their calling as prophets, priests and kings. But that order of righteousness, since it involves the transformation of the whole creation, embraces every relationship. And the church as institute will have fulfilled its mission. There will, for example, no longer be human pastors, elders and deacons, or synods and consistories, for their work will have been completed.

The kingdom of God is indeed realized significantly on earth through the ministry of Christ. Where God's name is hallowed and His will done through His grace, the petition of the Lord's prayer is positively answered. But obviously there is but one kingdom of God, and thus *the performance of God's will on earth must embrace every sphere and relationship, those of the state and family as well as those of the church*. The acknowledgement that the whole of life must be lived for the glory of God and in obedience to Him is one of the distinguishing marks of the Reformed faith. Because of that conviction pietism, quietism and world-flight are rejected and there is a concern to apply Reformed principles to every phase of

life for the honor of the King. There is a universality associated with the kingdom of God, therefore, that does not apply to the church.

A university, as even its name suggests, should be concerned with general and universal knowledge and its application to every sphere of life. A Calvinistic university could hardly have a narrower and more restricted goal. Such a university would, as it has been expressed, "have to provide training and conduct research through competent Christian scholars whose intelligent understanding of, and devotion to, the Christian faith would supply the true basis for, and the proper integration of, knowledge in the various fields of learning." Through such training and research it would, moreover, "*endeavor to equip men and women to bring the Christian faith in all its elements and implications effectually to bear upon the whole of life and upon every sphere of human vocation.*"

Is not such a university appropriately viewed as the task of Christians as citizens of the kingdom of God rather than as the task of the organized church? A Calvinistic university of all universities, because of the all-embracing world and life view bound up with the doctrine of the kingdom which is a special mark of Calvinism, would be grounded solidly in principle as a free university. *The church as institute has the glorious task of the proclamation of the whole counsel of God but its program of action is not that comprehensive one of the kingdom.*

Practical Considerations

No doubt the great appeal of the ecclesiastical approach is bound up largely with the very existence of Calvin College. It effectively carries on a program of general education and enjoys the support of the Christian Reformed Church. To fulfill the university ideal, it would seem simplest to develop and expand what already exists.

As the Rev. I. Van Delle has been reminding us, however, there are also weighty practical difficulties bound up with the church control plan. Here I limit myself to one or two points. In the first place, one may mention the difficulties which necessarily beset the government of a university by an ecclesiastical assembly. If a Synod were to exercise decisive control, there

would be no assurance that the delegates (who would not be chosen particularly because of their knowledge of and interest in Christian higher education) would by and large possess the competence to make judicious decisions concerning faculty and other matters affecting the university. If, on the other hand, the basic and actual control rested in a board of trustees elected by a synod, would such an ecclesiastical assembly be much more than a rubber stamp in connection with the discharge of many ultimate responsibilities?

In the second place, as the preceding point virtually implies, a successful university would require strong faculties and an able board of trustees. To insure the direction of a board possessing competence in the field of higher education, it would be advantageous to choose the best men available throughout the country rather than to make geographical distribution and classical membership decisive factors. And of even greater importance, with a view to guaranteeing the selection of faculties which would measure up to the high standards demanded by a truly Calvinistic university, it would appear short-sighted to limit in advance the selection of persons to man these posts to those who qualified as members of a particular denomination. Denominational membership could indeed be a significant factor in evaluating the spiritual qualifications of an individual, but to make membership in a particular church a *sine qua non* might in certain instances entail a distressing sacrifice of potential strength.

In dealing with practicalities one must get down to concrete plans. One of the merits of the Van Halsema-Ehlers-Zylstra discussion is that it enumerates plans and asks for decision on the background of their evaluation. My judgment is, however, that these plans are not so sharply exclusive of one another that the choice narrows down to just one of the six mentioned. Though I shall be referring to the plans outlined, my main contention is that *only the plan to establish a free university preserves the values of all or most of the plans*.

The World Plan, the plan of "total resources," which recognizes one Reformed world, is for all of its attractiveness of doubtful practicability if only because of the difficulties of organization and incorporation. But a free uni-

versity in America alone would offer bright hope of preserving its advantages. A free university could most easily recruit men from this single Reformed world, and would start from a principle acceptable to all.

The United States Plan similarly has the advantage of acknowledging the existence of resources beyond those of a single church and of a Reformed community inclusive of others besides the members of a single denomination.

Nevertheless, in my judgment, it is not necessary to regard *the United States Plan* and the *Calvin Plans* as mutually exclusive, at least not if a free university is contemplated. "In favor of all the *Calvin plans*, most particularly of the *church-controlled plan*," writes Dr. Zylstra, "is this formidable consideration: 'a homogeneous, self-conscious group would be behind it.'" It must be acknowledged that it would be of inestimable value to have such a group behind it. And in the present historical situation one cannot think of this group apart from the Christian Reformed community.

But it is surely not necessary to maintain that church control is essential to the realization of such support. May one not recognize that this community of Christian people, members of the Christian Reformed Church, must largely stand back of such a Calvinistic university, and yet that this very community could do so more satisfactorily through society control than church control?

Does not the Christian School movement provide a pattern in this respect? Though not church-controlled, it enjoys the whole-hearted support of this very group as a whole. And there is surely no loss of strength because other Christians who share the basic convictions of the movement are welcomed as members and co-workers. Accordingly, the approach outlined above, while rejecting the idea of a denominational university as the ideal goal, retains the chief advantages of the *World*, the *United States* and the *Calvin plans*.

To narrow the discussion somewhat further, the goal of a society-controlled university might be a combination of plans 2 (*the U. S. Plan*) and 4 (*the Calvin Plan: Society Controlled*) or possibly of 2 and 5 (*the Calvin Plan: Church and Society Controlled*). Under the latter alternative Calvin College would remain under church-control and the university would exist as a free graduate institution. At least at the beginning it would probably prove impractical in any case to approach the Christian Reformed Church with an offer to undertake control and support of Calvin College. This Church could hardly expect to receive at once the assurances it has properly required if the College were to be transferred to society control. Meanwhile, however, a beginning could be made with the distinctly graduate work of the university. The society plan, with its many admitted advantages, could thus be given a real trial. Without jeopardizing the interests of the Christian Reformed Church in Calvin College, but fulfilling

the demands of principle, a significant step forward toward the goal so devoutly desired by zealous Reformed people would be taken.

Exactly how the society would be organized is a matter that would require much prayerful thought. Perhaps an entirely new society would be established as Reformed Christians throughout the land would be rallied about the banner of truth. There might, however, be a possibility of integrating the university society with the Christian school societies throughout the country. At any rate a measure of integration with the Christian school movement associated in the National Union might be achieved. Such matters would have to be worked out on the basis of thorough discussion.

The work of arousing Calvinistic Christians to this task is a stupendous one. But there is strength in principle. The history of Christian education is proof of that. As appeal was made to principle there would be the possibility of arousing Calvinists everywhere to the conviction that nothing short of a comprehensive system of Christian education, including instruction and research on the highest academic level and preparing men for the learned professions and other vocations, is to be regarded not as a luxury but as a necessity grounded in the Christian faith. Shall we not pray and work for a genuine spiritual revival and reformation of Christian faith and life and a new dedication of our lives and fortunes to the end that the kingship of Christ may thus be freshly acknowledged in word and deed?

A Progressive Theology

by JAMES DAANE

THE Reformed character of Reformed theology is always in danger of being lost. Sometimes, as today, it is threatened by Liberalism, Sectarianism, and Dialectical theology. None of these, however, constitutes the greatest threat to Reformed theology. The greatest threat comes from those who love and cherish Reformed theology. Whenever the heirs of Reformed theology have entertained the attitude that Reformed theology is no longer a task to be worked

at, but an accomplishment to be enjoyed, Reformed theology has been in peril of its life.

Whenever theologians succumbed to the temptation to enter prematurely into their rest, theology was also laid to rest. At such times Reformed theology became a "body of knowledge" without a living soul. The idea of a theological task was indeed not surrendered; it was redefined. The task was no longer construed as the work of theological enrichment through

fresh insights and new understandings, but as the mere function of preserving the body of knowledge for coming generations. The body of theological knowledge was embalmed for the future, and its departed spirit generated no new theological advances.

At these points of arrested development, Reformed theology became, on the one hand, traditionalistic, and on the other, pietistic. Whenever Reformed theology regarded the theological enterprise

as a finished task and viewed its past with complete satisfaction, it became pure traditionalism: a past without a living present. With its task looked upon as finished, its future lay behind it. Nothing remained to be done but to pay homage to past achievements. But how soon the dead are forgotten! Whenever this point was reached, the spirit of the Reformation was dead. Questions concerning past theological formulations were then no longer tolerated, and the possibility of theological enrichment was itself regarded as impossible.

At such stages in the theological enterprise, it was impossible to understand that a genuine Reformed theology means constant enrichment through constant reformulations demanded by expanding insights into old truths and new insights into new truths. The arrestment of the theological process is the expression of faith in a glorious past — a past that has no present. This is the mark of Traditionalism.

On the other hand, when Reformed theologians prematurely carried their theology with them into their rest, Pietism inevitably emerged. The Reformation's demand for constant reformation was indeed not forgotten; it was redefined and restricted.

The principle of constant reformation was not allowed free play in the *theological life* of the Church. It was now applied exclusively to the Church's *practical religious* life. Church members were enjoined to be more holy, more consecrated, more pious. Individuals were exhorted to reform their spiritual lives, but the liturgical, ethical, theological forms in which the Reformed faith had been expressed became sacrosanct and untouchable. Piety required reformation, but theology was exempted. Spiritual living was the task; theology as the constant action of the mind of the Church upon its Faith was unimportant and even detrimental to true spirituality. This is the mark of Pietism.

Traditionalism denied theology a living present; Pietism divorced the mind of the Church from its Faith. Both the denial and divorcement became possible whenever Reformed theology arbitrarily arrested its theological processes. Whenever Reformed theologians regarded the task as finished, a dead traditionalism and a truncated pietism filled the vacuum.

Neither Traditionalism nor Pietism have ever been long able to stand against the moving streams of life and history.

Whenever these streams become turbulent, the present is forced upon the minds of men, demanding attention. Men are then thrust from their retreats in the past into the present, and compelled to reflect upon their faith in terms of the questions and problems of their own day. There are signs that we live in such a time today. There are also signs that in this critical time in our history, Reformed theology in America is for the most part at rest. Unless Reformed theology can be revitalized, alien theologies may well occupy the whole religious field. In the past, Reformed theology lost the battle with Liberalism and Fundamentalism for the mind of the American churches. Unless it can regain some of the strength which it once had, there is real danger that it will lose to vigorous alien theologies even the small place it now occupies.

Our Only Defense

OUR only defense against the threats of Fundamentalism, Liberalism, and Dialecticism is the constant repudiation of the comfortable but fatal attitude that our theological task is finished. At present there is an uneasy feeling among much of our leadership about the future of Reformed theology. It cannot be denied that the prospects are dim. Nor can it be doubted that the next twenty or thirty years will be decisive. Various measures are being taken to protect the distinctive character of our theology. Yet, complete honesty with ourselves will clear our vision to see that no artificial fences, mechanical safety measures, censorship of theological reading, no calculated devices of any kind — not even brilliant criticisms of alien theologies — will ever insure our theological future.

One thing only can keep strange fires from burning on our theological altar — a Reformed theology bristling with vitality and restless with creative power. No alien theologies will be able to displace Reformed theology unless they surpass it in energy and vitality. Ultimately it is true that Reformed theology cannot be displaced by the external pressures of alien theologies; it can only be displaced by the lack of will to live. It is equally true that the American religious environment cannot stifle its life-breath, unless Reformed theology spiritlessly surrenders to it. Those who are concerned about the future of Reformed theology would do

well to focus most of their attention, not on these alien theologies, but upon Reformed theology's present resources of vitality — or lack of it. Only a dynamic and living theology possesses an assured future.

Live and Grow!

ON any level, the chief characteristic of life is creativity. Life is a creative process. When creativity ceases, life ceases. Every living organism recreates itself in new forms. Every dynamic culture demands and produces new forms of expression. Just so, every living creative theology is impelled by its own inner restless energy to create for itself new forms of expression and modes of articulation. A living theology is always in restless process. It knows that so long as life remains, its task is unfinished. Convinced that the truth it holds is always greater than its finest comprehensions, theology ever presses back the frontiers of its own understanding of the Word of God by new and lengthening insights. Theology is a spiritual task. As all religious spirituality strains at the confines of its forms of expression and creates new patterns of expression, just so every living theology, as a true work of the Spirit, responds to the need of reforming its old theological forms of expression. Its new insights require reformulation. The newly fermented wine cannot be contained within the old wine skins.

A living theology is a creative theology. To be sure, it contends against alien theologies. But most of all it is concerned about the development of its own resources. And in this development of its own inner power, it finds its most effective defense against the threat of opposing systems of thought.

Theology is an aspect of the life of the Church. If the Church lives and grows, theology lives and grows. If theology dies, the Church dies. Together they live or together they die. The measure of the vitality of the one is the measure of the vitality of the other.

A Reformed theology, dynamic and creative, knows it has not spoken its last word, nor given final utterance to the Word in times past. It honors tradition, but does not succumb to traditionalism. It pays high honor to a Calvin, Bavinck, Kuyper, but it does not presume that they have spoken Reformed theology's final and ultimate word. Reformed theology lives and grows by the power of the Resurrection; the old ever dies

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to rise again in new forms of vitality in a better resurrection. This is the secret of the life of the Church — and no less of the Church's theology. Only such restless creative energy will insure Reformed theology against its displacement.

Past Without Future?

A survey of American Reformed theology in recent decades gives small comfort to those concerned about its future in this country. It has shown few signs of creativity. There has been little of either theological discussion or literary production which can honestly be regarded as fresh and dynamic, aglow with the touch of originality. During these many decades Reformed theology has added little luster to its armor. And there seems to be little awareness and little regret that this is so.

With rare exception, there has been little theological writing of academic calibre and intellectual respectability. Writings that have appeared have been largely commonplace and repetitious, more defensive than offensive, more negative than positive. An example of the latter is the large number of books written against pre-millennialism in the last thirty years, as compared with the almost complete dearth of positive development of our a-millennial position. This rather ample anti-pre material stands in glaring contrast to the undeveloped a-mill position, which Professor Berkhof describes as "purely negative and to which he gives no separate treatment in the chapter on "Millennial Theories" in his *Systematic Theology*. In the Bultema case in 1918, our Church declared its belief in the present Lordship of Christ, but little has been done to give this truth expanding content. The same lot has befallen the doctrine of Common Grace. Virtually nothing has been done, theologically speaking, with these two doctrines, each so vital for the social-political and religious situation of our time.

Another evidence of a theological sterility is the current activity in republishing old theological works. This indeed is not without value. Yet if Reformed theology were progressively creative, many of these old works would be regarded as outdated. A progressive theology makes such works of greater historical than contemporary value. Old

works have their value as *past* theological expression, but they are not an adequate substitute for up-to-date theological expression. Republication of old Reformed theological works will never be able to hold the line against up-to-date non-Reformed theological productions written in the language and problems of our times.

The reason for their inadequacy is clear. Older theological writings do not meet head-on the present theological issues that threaten Reformed theology. The challenge of Barthianism, for example, cannot be effectively met and answered by translations of Bavinck and Kuyper, for the obvious reason that they in their day did not face the problems in the form posed by Barth in our day. To be a vital theological force on today's theological scene, Reformed theology must not republish but reproduce. It must not merely preserve and reiterate the old, but procreate the new.

The Church, no more than Nature, can tolerate a vacuum. Unless Reformed theology succeeds in filling the theological vacuum created in recent decades, its days are numbered, and alien theologies will move in to fill the void.

Let Us Arise!

It is not the intent of this article to seek the cause of theological sterility, but to point to the fact, and to challenge the Church to a re-vitalization of her theology. Unless we experience a theological revival, there is no possibility of retaining our Reformed character. Theology as well as the Church must constantly reform. Unless this spirit of the Reformation is again recaptured for the theological enterprise, we may indeed continue as a "Christian" but not as a "Christian Reformed" Church. America has many an old Reformed Church, which is no longer the "old church." The old names and the old organizational

structures remain, but the theological character of these churches has undergone transformation as to render them unrecognizable to those who planted them on American soil. The embarrassment of their old creeds is relieved by reducing the creeds to points by which to measure their later progress.

All historical precedents suggest that our younger church will pass through the same historical transformation. But if it please God to give us a unique history and permit us to retain our Reformed character, it will be accomplished through a revival of theology. For the movement from "Reformed" to "Liberalism" and "Fundamentalism" has always been a movement away from a vital theology.

Theology is the function of the Church. It cannot be accomplished by one or two individuals. In our present theological situation no individual can do more than stimulate the fermentation of theological ideas. Theology, as a task, is the task of the whole Church; theology, as an achievement, rises out of the life of the whole Church. A single individual can make but an individual contribution.

It is with hope and prayer that an attempt will be made in the pages of this *Journal* to stimulate theological interest and discussion by the contribution of short series on theological topics. If they do nothing more than strike off theological sparks and stimulate theological discussion, they shall have served good purpose.

Such intention runs the risk of seeming presumptuous, but the need is great and must be met, because for lack of a creative theology a Reformed Church cannot endure.

A dynamic theology, sought with spiritual passion and pursued with courage, open to progress and restless with creative vitality, is, under God, our only sure defense against the menacing factors that threaten our Reformed character.

"In doing what we ought to do we deserve no praise, because it is our duty."

—St. Augustine

The Christian Textbook and the Protestant Mind

by W. HARRY JELLEMA

AMONG all the divine blessings that our group as Christian Reformed denomination enjoys there is none more deserving of our humble and unceasing gratitude than the fact that in the providence of God we have our system of Christian education.

Recognition of the need of some kind of Christian training is wellnigh universal among Christians. But among Protestants generally the idea with which our fathers were divinely inspired, the idea of education as wide in its scope and as profoundly different as the Kingdom of God, is absent. Nor did God bless us only with a vision of what Christian education should be; He gave us also the implementing institutions which we possess today.

As with all divine favors, even with those we receive in answer to urgent prayer, once we have them we are subject to a double weakness. As we become accustomed to their possession, our sense of gratitude wears off; we forget that we have no inherent title to them; we even forget what life was and would be without them. And equally our sense of responsibility wanes; we forget our stewardship; we forget our vows. These two, the cooling of our gratitude and the dulling of our sense of challenging obligation, go hand in hand.

Our generation is accustomed to the Christian school. Correspondingly, there is grave danger that we lose a sense of lively gratitude for this blessing and of the challenging responsibility which goes with this privilege. We tend to assume that Christian education is a fully accomplished fact, and that we have discharged our whole obligation if only the budgets are met and school is kept. And as the vision of our duty dims, our notion of Christian education tends more and more to fade into the idea of Christian training which prevails in evangelical Protestantism generally, and which struggles vainly against the modernity by which it is unconsciously conditioned.

HENCE the fact that our generation raises the question of Chris-

tian textbooks and can be aroused to the importance of the question is occasion for taking heart. The fact could be significant of a profoundly revived sense of gratitude and obligation to God. It could mean that our vision of Christian education is clear, and that our generation rises in faith to meet a challenge providentially confronting us. It could lead to a vigorous affirmation of Christian education in and for our day, and with the blessing of the Holy Spirit to a quickening of Christian faith and life throughout our denomination. It could mean that instead of drifting with the stream of American evangelical Protestantism we and our house intend by the grace of God to live by all of Scripture. It could mean that instead of thinking of Reformed theology and Calvinism as something for intellectual assent only, or even as something that stands in the way of warm devotion and Christian experience, we recognize it as ripe fruit of deep Christian experience and burning devotion.

True, the fact might be significant only of our awareness that a separate building in which teachers and pupils merely recite the contemporary textbooks is not a Christian school; nor even with additional sporadic criticisms of the textbooks by the teachers. It might mean no more than that we are disturbed by an occasional paragraph of overtly evolutionistic cast in a biology text, or by an occasional profanity in a novel. It might lead to no more than reproductions of the contemporary textbook, except for peripheral excisions and externalistic additions of abstract theorizing and evangelical exhortations. Even so much might be good, except that we should think we had now done justice to Christian education; that we had now arrived. And that would be bad.

So much and no more, were we to think that we had solved the textbook problem, would be bad because it would mean that we had uncritically accepted the current tendency to let a fulsome textbook usurp the function of the teacher, and to suppose that the remedy for mediocre teaching lies in

providing exhaustive texts. Christian education is not to be achieved with teachers who simply recite "textbooks"; and if the currently popular demotion of the teacher to a condition of servility to a "textbook" is bad in any school, it is doubly bad in a Christian school. Christian education seeks teachers who are free because mastered by God and His Word and masters of the subject matter to be taught.

But a mistaken view of the function of the textbook would be only part of the evil, though of a piece with the whole.

For so much and no more, did we think we had solved the textbook problem, would be bad because it would mean that we were blindly retaining the whole framework of the modern mind. What is wrong with the contemporary trend in "textbooks" is not only their resultant arrogance, an arrogance at which any educator may well become uneasy. The current fulsome "textbook" is a concrete embodiment of the mind of modernity in the anti-Christian sense of the phrase. The evil in the textbook to which the Christian educator objects is much more than a statement here and there, or the omission of a statement somewhere else. Nor even is the evil simply a matter of an abstract theory; an evil that could be met by presenting an equally abstracted Christian theory. The evil lies in the whole framework of assumptions, assumptions also in fields beyond that of the subject immediately at hand; it lies in all that is silently taken for granted; it lies in the mind which controls the author in his selection and organization and emphases and objectives; in the mind that pervades the material and its presentation. That is why a Christian educator cannot be satisfied with a simple dehydration of the textbook to which he objects; boiling it down, removing objectionable paragraphs, would still leave the original skeleton. Indeed, the metaphor is inaccurate; for it is not dead bones but the living mind of modernity that would always remain. And unless we are sensitive to the real nature of the evil we would remedy, we shall have

taken a Trojan horse into the citadel of our offense and defense.

JUST as behind the current objectionable "textbooks" there is modernity's answer to the question what education is, and behind this in turn modernity's answer to the religious question of the meaning of human life, so behind the problem of Christian textbooks there is the problem of what Christian education is. We cannot write Christian textbooks without either consciously or unconsciously defining Christian education. And we do better by consciously and deliberately addressing ourselves to the problem; the problem, I mean, of so defining Christian education that it begins to take on concrete meaning as a mind that controls and patterns and lives in the subject matter. More specifically, the problem is that of deliberately deciding as Christian educators whether we intend Christian education among us to drift into typically American currents of evangelical or liberal Protestantism, or whether we intend with divine help to undertake the more difficult task of making clear to ourselves and others that and how our system of Christian education is actually not merely a variant solution, but substantially the right one; of making clear that in Calvinism

as disciplined affirmation of a warmly evangelical Christian faith, we have a mature Christian mind that can discern the mind of modernity.

For this is indeed the real issue in the whole problem of Christian textbooks. What we as Christian educators and as Christian community oppose is nothing less than a mind, an anti-Christian mind: a mind that is disciplined expression of an anti-Christian religious commitment, a mind that is engaged in building at another kingdom than the Kingdom of God. And it takes a matured and disciplined mind on the part of the Christian community to discern the anti-Christian mind of modernity. Without such mind, the Christian community cannot witness effectively in opposition; nor can it make meaningful and challenging to the younger generation our citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

A rich asset of the Reformed or Calvinistic wing of Protestantism, historically, has been its recognition that Christian faith must develop disciplined mind, as a servant of faith and as also a guide to action by citizens of the Kingdom of our Lord. Recognition of this need to develop and exercise Christian mind is basic to our insistence on our system of Christian education.

But development of the disciplined Christian mind is both difficult and dangerous. That it requires constant and continuous study of the Word of God and loyal and humble submission to its infallible authority is obvious. And this is already difficult. That it requires as well readiness to be disciplined by what the Holy Spirit has taught the church through the ages, is even to many evangelical Protestants in our day, not obvious. And in any event, this, too, takes a taxing measure of diligence and patience and humility. But development of disciplined Christian mind requires also that the Christian community in its study of Scripture and of Christian tradition and historical practice constantly make use of content which is outside these. And this requirement spells the danger in large letters; letters so large that any evangelical Christian may read.

And in consequence whether of the difficulty or of the danger writ in large letters, evangelical Protestantism has shied away from the task of developing Christian mind; and every generation of professedly Reformed people has been tempted anew to shy away from it.

But meanwhile the danger writ in small letters is not read.

The final article in this series by Dr. Jellema will appear in the October issue.

Wordsworth and Hollywood

by HENRY ZYLSTRA

THE English poet and social critic, William Wordsworth, writing in the year 1800, had something important to say about Hollywood.

Not that Hollywood existed then. Wordsworth was talking about its equivalent in his own society. He was talking about the popular novels and plays which constituted the marketable entertainment of his time and country. But, in speaking of those, he put his finger exactly upon the essence of Hollywood.

This is what he said: . . . *A multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to*

a state of almost savage torpor To this tendency of life and manners, the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves.

The emphasis is on the cause. Wordsworth is more impressed by the evil of the cause than by the evil of the effect. That is seeing the symptom of Hollywood in relation to what it is symptomatic of. Out of this social heart, says Wordsworth, comes the issue of Hollywood.

He might have said that the novelists were wicked. He might have said that the dramatists were immoral. He might have pointed out that the actors and actresses were a bad lot. He might have gone on to say that the show peo-

ple were profiteering in the illegitimate commodity of harmful entertainment. He might have said these things, for the most part justly.

Presumably he did not wish to pardon those by whom the offense of Hollywood comes. But he wanted this time to stress the other fact, counterpart to the first: namely, that it must needs be that the offense come. Hollywood is not an extravagant exception. It has a social dimension. It is a typical manifestation. Not that the environment is responsible. People are responsible. But it is the people generally who are responsible, not solely the novelists, playwrights, actors, actresses, and producers. The wages of the sin of those at Hollywood will be

death; but Hollywood is itself also a spiritual death accruing to demoralized men in society.

Wordsworth speaks of a multitude of causes, an accumulation of influences. It is these, he says, which bring about a state of mind, a social morale, of which Hollywood is inevitably and characteristically expressive. These causes did not always exist, were "unknown to former times." In other words, the social trouble with which Wordsworth is dealing is a particular historical form of evil. It is a modern development.

Among those causes, those influences "now acting with a combined force," Industrialism bulks big for Wordsworth. He is thinking of Industrialism, of course, in a particular context of meaning. He is thinking of an Industrialism which has become a religion. It has become a religion in that it determines the goals of man. Those goals, he thinks, should be determined by something else, and served by business.

Wordsworth, then, sees Industrialism in the context of an atheistic Enlightenment, its dry reason now ebbing out in a normless individualism and a secularistic science. Life and manners follow in the wake of this defection. Men accumulate in cities where "the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident." The theatrical exhibitions of the time conform themselves. Hence Hollywood.

It is no wonder, therefore, that Hollywood is the kind of thing it is. Wordsworth's phrases are the right phrases for what has taken place: a blunting of the discriminating powers of the mind, unfitting it for voluntary exertion — indeed, a savage torpor. Compare the theatre advertisements of the daily paper. One exclamation point will not do. There is a screaming stridency: Terrific! Daring Sensational! Blood-curdling! The eccentric, the extravagant, and the monstrous; the violent, and the sexually titillating — these are the regular offerings. This is a far cry from the moral freedom and creative expressiveness proper to the spirit of man. So seen, Hollywood proves to be the only potsherd left with edges sharp enough to scrape dehumanized man into some sort of response.

And Hollywood, says Wordsworth, is a social creation. In its face you see

delineated the features of the society that makes it.

IRRESPECTIVE now of whether Wordsworth's outline of causes is precisely such as we would ourselves draw, we cannot deny that there are these deeper reaches of implication in the phenomenon of Hollywood. Nor can we escape involvement by isolating the symptom as a pocket of wickedness in a generally decent world. Hollywood is worse than a patch of poison ivy, which can be staked off, marked Danger, and so quite entirely avoided. The Pagan novelists, immoral actors, profiteering vendors of illegitimate commodities, and marquee hawkers are not quite the measure of the evil. There are also those "causes now acting with a combined force." We have not done with those when we see to it that the actresses "get religion" and we ourselves stay out of the theatre.

It is binding upon the Christian to live the decent personal life. But the personal is involved with the civilized. Consequently there are harder things to do than to live the decent life of what Wordsworth called a "cold abstinence from evil deeds." Civilization, especially modern civilization, entangles us in a guilt we cannot acquit ourselves of. That is the interesting thing about an acknowledgment of the social dimension of evil. It makes for a profounder sense of individual responsibility.

Who of us, for instance, though we make and promote no movies, can quite come clean from the mammonistic texture of life which, as Wordsworth saw and said, is loveless and normless in its autonomy? Who of us has so far resisted the economic momentums, business activisms, and political slogans as to keep the pristine tenderness, the wholesome sensibility, which is proper to the child of God? Presumably none. Presumably we too have not set the contemplative in judgment over the active, consulting the end to justify the process, and to harvest it. Perhaps, even while castigating Hollywood, our own reading ran to the simplistic, the digested, the pictorialized, and the striking. That too was falling short of the requirements of a Christian doctrine of man.

Thus an admission of the social implications of Hollywood leads to humil-

ity. It is just this note one misses in the attacks upon the movie industry in the popular evangelical Protestant press. The sexual immorality of the actresses, for instance, gets so much more attention than the Industry that promotes it. Presumably this is because sexual sin can be isolated as a piece of personal misconduct, whereas Business is so far woven into the social texture that it seems to lie beyond the arm of religion to touch it. As for an atheistic Enlightenment as source and springboard for a normless industry, science, and art — concerning that, in this press I speak of, Christianity is supposed to have nothing to say. Such formalism works with sin and evil on the plane of its "personal," external, individualized manifestations. The evil of Hollywood particularly is exploited, as though in search of a wicked world to be handily distinctive from.

Such a Protestantism, although it can become strident about "personal religion," and inveigh against a "social Gospel," can also end up without humility, the Catechism, and a need for the Saviour.

Social historians say that evangelical Protestantism is superficial in its social criticism. This charge does not embarrass us so long as it comes from a liberal who is looking to environmental change for his Utopia. But the charge embarrasses us when, as it sometimes does, it comes from a Christian historian. Then we allow that there is something to it. Then we admit that we have featured the isolably personalistic evils: vice, crime, gambling, drunkenness, sexual immorality, realistic fiction, and Hollywood. We isolate them, externalize them, accept the symptom for the disease. This, we say, is what evil is. This is sin. This, we say, is the world. To these mainly, to what lies behind them hardly at all, we apply our sermons, on these converge our exhortation. We can almost keep the law of decency perfectly.

The result is superficial social criticism. The result is also meager contribution to social improvement. But those are the less important results. More important is the religious loss, the loss of spiritual conviction: that our miseries are great, that we desperately need our Redeemer, and that our gratitude ought to be boundless.

A Letter from Japan

THE Rev. Henry Bruinooge, stationed in Tokyo as a missionary of the Christian Reformed Church to Japan, makes some pertinent observations about the world-wide calling of our Church. In a letter to *The Reformed Journal* he gives a statement of his reaction to the article of the Rev. George Stob, entitled: "The Christian Reformed Church in the American World," (*Reformed Journal*, June, 1951). The substance of his letter reads as follows:

"I fail to see . . . why Mr. Stob has only stressed that we can emerge from our isolationism and be fruitful and influential in our *American* world. His 'five-point program' through which the Christian Reformed Church may play a vital role in Christian service can also be accomplished on a *world-wide* scale. Allow me to expand his proposed program to include the following:

1) A serious and vigorous Foreign Missions effort, as well as a Home Mis-

sions effort. Even though our Church has undertaken to man new fields, and even though the Synods of 1950 and 1951 are trumpeted as 'Mission Synods,' there has been a dearth of those who are willing to carry our Reformed truth to foreign lands. If Reformed truth is the truth, and the only true Gospel, let us earnestly seek to propagate that truth throughout the world.

2) Expansion of our Back to God Radio Hour on a world-wide basis. The Lutheran Hour has long been heard in many foreign countries. Why not adapt our program to foreign listeners as well and maintain a voice calling our *world* back to God? There are thousands throughout the world who have traded the truth of God in Jesus Christ for the lie of modern liberalism, agnosticism, and heresies of every description. Such untruth is not peculiar to America alone.

3) Write Reformed religious literature for the consumption of peoples of

every land. It might surprise us that in spite of ourselves such works as Berkhof's 'Reformed Doctrine' and Meeter's 'Calvinism' have already been translated into oriental languages. Other Reformed works are being given wide and appreciated circulation in the Orient. More could be done, on our part, by giving translators both incentives and encouragement.

4) Make it possible for foreign students to come to Calvin College and Seminary through regular, ecclesiastical channels, using such means as publicity and scholarships. In the past our aid to foreign students has been too haphazard in administration and too lukewarm in publicity. Our Church is behind others in having such machinery set up.

5) Plan to make the facilities of Calvinistic University in America available for use by students from the world community of the Reformed faith.

With these additions to Mr. Stob's five-point program, our Church will be a real witness to our modern world which is fast losing its geographical limitations."

"If those who are called philosophers, and especially the Platonists, have said aught that is true and in harmony with our faith, we are not only not to shrink from it, but to claim it for our own use from those who have unlawful possession of it. For, as the Egyptians had not only the idols and heavy burdens which the people of Israel hated and fled from, but also vessels and ornaments of gold and silver, and garments, which the same people when going out of Egypt appropriated to themselves, designing them for a better use, not doing this on their own authority, but by the command of God . . . ; in the same way all branches of heathen learning have not only false and superstitious fancies and heavy burdens of unnecessary toil, which every one of us, when going out under the leadership of Christ from the fellowship of the heathen, ought to abhor and avoid; but they contain also liberal instruction

which is better adapted to the use of the truth and some most excellent precepts of morality and some truths in regard even to the worship of the One God are found among them. Now these are, so to speak, their gold and silver which they did not create themselves, but dug out of the mines of God's providence which are everywhere scattered abroad, and are perversely and unlawfully prostituting to the worship of devils. These, therefore, the Christian when he separates himself in spirit from the miserable fellowship of these men, ought to take away from them, and to devote to their proper use in preaching the gospel. Their garments, also, — that is, human institutions such as are adapted to that intercourse with men which is indispensable in this life — we must take and turn to a Christian use."

—St. Augustine (354-430 AD), On Christian Doctrine II, 61.